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ABSTRACT

The 1981 policy statement of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) is presented. AASCU believes that low tuition offers the primary guarantee of access to educational opportunity with far more certainty than student aid programs alone. Aspects of the Higher Education Act of 1980 that AASCU has strongly supported include modification of the half-cost limitation, revision in the commuter allowance, further aid to self-supporting students, modification of the College Work-Study program, more aid to part-time and graduate students, and an increase in authorizations for the Supplementary Educational Opportunity Grant and National Direct Student Loan programs. AASCU opposes tuition tax credits as a way to help finance higher education because they would be highly expensive and inflationary, would encourage raising of tuition, and would most aid upper-income students attending high-cost institutions. Other significant improvements of the Act are noted, including changes in the continuing education or outreach programs, aid to college libraries, and a developing colleges program. The need for AASCU institutions to be concerned with overall budgetary, fiscal, and appropriations policy and with the developments of other federal programs that affect higher education is noted. AASCU leaders will continue to participate in decision-making regarding higher education by working actively on national boards such as the National Science Board. AASCU opposes the efforts of some state coordinating agencies to use federal laws to strengthen the power of such agencies over institutions of higher education. (SW)

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National Imperatives for Higher Education 1981

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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The American Association of State Colleges and Universities reaffirms its commitment to: the basic principle of equality of opportunity to assure students from all walks of life access to higher education; the equitable distribution of federal funding to further a diverse yet effective higher education system throughout the nation; and, a strengthened voice for higher education to rectify present–and prevent further-unreasonable regulation and intrusion from federal and state governments.

The following policy statement was endorsed by the AASCU membership at its 20th annual meeting, November 1980.

Access To Higher Education Through Low Tuition and Student Aid

AASCU believes that every American should have the opportunity for a postsecondary education suited to his or her needs and qualifications. Lack of funds should not be a barrier to opportunity.

Public colleges and universities are an essential part of the American higher education system. They enroll about 80 percent of all college students, a higher percentage in most states. Low tuition offers the primary guarantee of access to educational opportunity with far more certainty than student aid programs alone.

Student aid is a supplement, not a substitute, for low tuition. In no case should tuition and other charges be raised in the hope that student aid will somehow provide for all those in "real need," or on the more dangerous assumption that most students should finance their education through expensive loans and large debts. As far as is possible, students should be able to attend college through a combination of low tuition, grants, and work.

The federal government is to be congratulated on the passage of the Middle-Income Student Assistance Act (MISAA) in 1978 and the extension of the Higher Education Act in 1980. Together, these two programs offer great hope for access to college for both lower-income and middle-income students at institutions of all kinds.

AASCU strongly supported amendments to the Higher Education Act of 1980 which aided

lower- and moderate-income students, who had been discriminated against in prior legislation. These amendments included a higher proportion of support for many students through modification of the half-cost limitation which existed under the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant program (BEOG); revision in the commuter allowance, which helps many students living off campus who work and are often partly or completely self-supporting; as well as further aid to self-supporting students in general.

Further student aid revisions of great importance included: modification of the College Work-Study program along lines suggested by AASCU to make the program more educationally relevant; more aid for part-time and graduate students; and an increase in authorizations for the Supplementary Educational Opportunity Grant and National Direct Student Loan programs. Changes in the Guaranteed Student Loan program will reduce costs in this program and also give parents more flexibility in borrowing to meet unusual needs.

AASCU successfully opposed several plans for a "student loan bank" which could have led to much greater emphasis on expensive, long-term loans and more reliance on student borrowing as a principal way to finance higher education. AASCU continues to oppose such plans.

AASCU advocated that the new legislation call for states and colleges not to substitute federal dollars for non-federal dollars they would otherwise have spent, and also called for a study of the effect of federal student aid on college tuition and other charges. We commend Congress for accepting these ideas. AASCU witnesses informed Congress of the possible dangers should states or institutions raise their charges in an attempt to lessen their costs by transferring them to federal student financial aid.

Tuition Tax Credits and Student Aid

AASCU is very concerned about proposals for tuition tax credits as a way to help finance higher education. Such tax credits would be highly expensive and inflationary. They would encourage both public and private colleges to raise tuition, leaving students and their families no better off than before. Further, tax credits tend to provide the most aid to upper-income students attending high-cost institutions, and the least to lower- and middle-income students at public colleges.

What is more important, tax credits would compete with funding for student aid. They could result in the reduction of federal grants, work-study, and loans, which provide far more aid to the great majority of students than tax credits would.

AASCU urges Congress once again to reject tax credits in favor of adequate support for student aid.

Other New Higher Education Act Programs

The new act also made significant improvements in other programs of great interest to higher education. These revisions included changes in the continuing education or outreach programs, aid to college libraries, a developing colleges program, more funds for TRIO, aid to schools of education and teacher centers, new international educational programs, new aid for facilities and cooperative education, authorization of new graduate education assistance, and a new Urban Grant University title, among others. All of these were strongly supported by AASCU institutions.

Budget and Appropriations Issues

Increasingly, AASCU institutions and other spokesmen for higher education must concern themselves with overall budgetary, fiscal, and appropriations policy. The 1980 Higher Education Act almost fell victim to Congressional desires to make major reductions in domestic spending in order to reduce budget deficits and increase defense spending. No one questions the importance of these latter concerns, but, a sense of balance is needed among competing national priorities.

Other Federal Programs

AASCU maintains a keen interest in a wide range of federal legislative and agency policy developments which affect higher education. These include authorizations and appropriations for the National Science Foundation, both for

research and for science education; a growing involvement in other scientific research programs; health manpower programs, including the Nurse Training Act and the Allied Health Professions Act; funds for both domestic agricultural research and international agricultural development; other international education programs; funding for the programs of the National Foundation for the Arts and the Humanities; tax legislation which can benefit or harm colleges and universities; the Social Security student beneficiary program; educational benefits for veterans and servicemen, including the possibility of a new peacetime G. I. Bill; the revival of general state revenue sharing funds, some of which now go to help colleges; bills involving lobbying registration; and many other areas.

Particular interests in 1981 will include educational telecommunications legislation, especially in the field of cable TV which has great potential for colleges, and postsecondary vocational education legislation. The federal government and the states have generally ignored the important contribution which public four-year colleges and regional state universities make to vocational education. AASCU hopes to remedy this. AASCU also has followed developments in youth employment legislation, urging that teacher training and retraining components be built into such laws.

Participation of AASCU Leaders in Decision-Making

AASCU has worked actively to have its administrators and faculty appointed to such national boards as the National Science Board, National Council on the Humanities, National Advisory Council on Vocational Education, Board of International Food and Agricultural Development, and other agencies. We will continue to do so, in order that this important sector of higher education is not neglected in policy-making.

AASCU also has worked for several years in cooperation with the agencies, to develop extensive lists of AASCU faculty members who can serve as peer reviewers for proposals submitted to the National Science Foundation and other agencies. This can help other AASCU institutions seeking funding.

Federal-State-Institutional Relations

AASCU is deeply disturbed at and opposes the efforts of some state coordinating agencies to use federal laws to strengthen the power of such agencies over institutions of higher education. AASCU successfully opposed certain amendments to the Higher Education Act intended to strengthen the state role. AASCU believes that states and institutions should be free to work out their own arrangements without federal intervention. Similarly, AASCU believes that the assignment of federal vocational educational funds to a single state agency, usually the agency for elementary-secondary education, limits state flexibility in dealing with postsecondary matters and often discriminates against higher education.

AASCU also has led the fight for several years against the efforts of some states to enact restrictive "reappropriation" language which would require that state legislatures reappropriate all federal funds going to public colleges and universities before these institutions can utilize them. Some states also require the advance approval of all applications for federal funds by state agencies, which can result in the loss of federal funds.

This matter is not resolved as yet, but the momentum for very rigid state control over federal funds to colleges appears to have lessened. AASCU wishes to thank the National Conference of State Legislatures which, after careful study, recommended that states should not pass such restrictive laws covering colleges and universities.

Conclusion

State colleges and universities, are a major resource for the education of millions of Americans, about a fourth of all undergraduates and many graduate students. They are also a major resource in research, international education, economic development, and community service. In the uncertain times that lie ahead, with both demographic and fiscal problems facing most states, AASCU institutions need to make their case as clearly as possible with both federal and state officials.

Most federal programs affecting higher education serve America well. Many are under-funded. AASCU stands ready to work with officials to improve these programs and to try to reduce conflicts arising from unreasonable federal or state intrusion into academic matters.

However, there are still too many forms of regulation or restriction which are counter-productive in terms of the purpose of these programs. There is a need to provide incentives to unleash the talents and energies of public colleges and universities of America, if they are to fulfill their mandate to educate a wide range of fellow citizens.

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Livingston University
Troy State University
University of Alabama in Huntsville
University of Montevallo
University of North Alabama
University of South Alabama

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Northern Arizona University

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Arkansas State University
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University of Central Arkansas

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California State College, Bakersfield
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California State College, Stanislaus
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
California State University, Chico
California State University, Domingues Hills
California State University, Fresno
California State University, Fullerton
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California State University, Los Angeles
California State University, Northridge
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San Diego State University
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University of Colorado, Colorado Springs
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University of Southern Colorado
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Western Connecticut State College

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Florida International University
University of Central Florida
University of North Florida
University of South Florida
University of West Florida

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Augusta College
Columbus College
Georgia College
Georgia Southern College
Georgia State University
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Savannah State College
Southern Technical Institute
Valdosta State College
West Georgia College

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University of Guam

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Idaho State University
Lewis-Clark State College

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Rhode Island College

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College of Charleston
Francis Marion College
Lander College
University of South Carolina at Aiken
University of South Carolina at Spartanburg
Winthrop College

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South Dakota School of Mines and Technology
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Tennessee Technological University
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University of Tennessee at Martin

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East Texas State University at Texarkana

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